

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1    1. A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a  
2    communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the  
3    communications system, the method comprising:

4         connecting from the first client to a communications system host;  
5         sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to  
6         establish a direct connection to the second client;  
7         when the second client accepts the request, establishing a direct connection to the  
8         second client that bypasses the communications system host; and  
9         transferring a file over the direct connection.

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1    2. The method of claim 1, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications  
2    system host.

1    3. The method of claim 1, wherein the second client accepts the request based on indicated  
2    preferences of the second subscriber.

1    4. The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is initiated by the second client.

1    5. The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection to the second client is established  
2    using an IP address of the second client.

1    6. The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface indicating  
2    that a direct connection to the second client is established.

1    7. The method of claim 1, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant  
2    messaging host.

1    8. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a data file.

1    9. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a text file.

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A1

- 1 10. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.
- 1 11. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises an audio file.
- 1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein the file comprises a video file.
- 1 13. The method of claim 1, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.
- 1 14. A method of transferring a file from a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, the method comprising:
  - 4 connecting from the second client to a communications system host;
  - 5 receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to establish a direct connection;
  - 6 accepting the request from the first client;
  - 7 establishing a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications system host; and
  - 8 receiving a file over the direct connection.
- 1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the request is authenticated by the communications system host.
- 1 16. The method of claim 14, wherein accepting the request is based on indicated preferences of the second subscriber.
- 1 17. The method of claim 14, further comprising initiating the direct connection.
- 1 18. The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is established by the first client using an IP address of the second client.
- 1 19. The method of claim 14, further comprising displaying a graphical user interface indicating that a direct connection to the first client is established.

1       20. The method of claim 14, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant  
2       messaging host.

1       21. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a data file.

1       22. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a text file.

*Sub*  
*A1*     1       23. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a graphics file.

1       24. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises an audio file.

*Proprietary*  
*Information*     1       25. The method of claim 14, wherein the file comprises a video file.

*Proprietary*  
*Information*     1       26. The method of claim 14, further comprising receiving an indication that the first  
2       subscriber using the first client is composing a message.

*Proprietary*  
*Information*     1       27. The method of claim 26, further comprising receiving the message composed by the first  
2       subscriber from the first client.

*Proprietary*  
*Information*     1       28. The method of claim 14, wherein the direct connection is a socket connection.

*Proprietary*  
*Information*     1       29. An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first  
2       subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber  
3       to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a first client configured to:

4              connect from the first client to a communications system host;

5              send through the communications system host a request to the second client to  
6       establish a direct connection to the second client;

7              when the second client accepts the request, establish a direct connection to the second  
8       client that bypasses the communications system host; and

9              transfer a file over the direct connection.

1       30. An apparatus for transferring one or more files from a first client associated with a first  
2       subscriber to a communications system to a second client associated with a second subscriber  
3       to the communications system, the apparatus comprising a second client configured to:

4              connect from the second client to a communications system host;  
5              receive, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to  
6       establish a direct connection;  
7              accept the request from the first client;  
8              establish a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications  
9       system host; and  
10          receive a file over the direct connection.

Sub  
A1  
1       31. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from  
2       a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client  
3       associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions  
4       for:

5              connecting from the first client to a communications system host;  
6              sending, through the communications system host, a request to the second client to  
7       establish a direct connection to the second client;  
8              when the second client accepts the request, establishing a direct connection to the  
9       second client that bypasses the communications system host; and  
10          transferring a file over the direct connection.

1       32. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

1       33. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client  
2       device.

1       34. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host  
2       device.

1       35. The method of claim 31 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a propagated  
2       signal.

1       36. A computer program, stored on a computer readable medium for transferring a file from  
2       a first client associated with a first subscriber to a communications system to a second client  
3       associated with a second subscriber to the communications system, comprising instructions  
4       for:

5              connecting from the second client to a communications system host;  
6              receiving, through the communications system host, a request from the first client to  
7       establish a direct connection;  
8              accepting the request from the first client;  
9              establishing a direct connection to the first client that bypasses the communications  
10       system host; and  
11              receiving a file over the direct connection.

1       37. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a disc.

1       38. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a client  
2       device.

1       39. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium comprises a host  
2       device.

1       40. The method of claim 37 wherein the computer readable medium is a propagated signal.

1       41. A method of communicating between a first client associated with a first subscriber to a  
2       communications system and a second client associated with a second subscriber to the  
3       communications system, the method comprising:

4              connecting from the second client to a communications system host;  
5              establishing a direct connection to the client that bypasses the communications  
6       system host;

7 receiving an indication that the first subscriber using the first client is composing a  
8 message; and  
9 receiving the message composed by the first subscriber from the first client.

1 42. The method of claim 41, wherein the indication comprises a text message.

1 43. The method of claim 41, wherein the indication comprises an icon.

1 44. The method of claim 41, wherein the communications system host comprises an instant  
2 messaging host.

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SERIALIZED FILED